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INTRODUCTION

The Child Support Enforcement Program is a joint undertaking involving federal, state, and local cooperative efforts. As our nation's largest employer, the Federal government has an important role in the Child Support Enforcement Program. Within the Federal government, the Department of Defense (DoD) is the largest federal agency, with approximately

- 1.4 million active duty military personnel,
- 1.4 million reserved military personnel,
- 2.0 million retired military personnel, and
- 800,000 civilian employees working for DoD.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) provides payroll for all military and DoD civilians and is responsible for implementation of child support orders. Currently DFAS is remitting payments for approximately 365,000 garnishments, more than 70% of which are for child support.

Communication with the military has often been a challenging experience for state and county child support offices. In an effort to assist states in their interaction with the military, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has prepared this resource document. The purpose of this document is to provide policy and procedural guidance to child support staff working with the military in the following areas:

- Requesting verification of employment and pay,
- Issuing income-withholding orders,
- Issuing National Medical Support Orders, and
- Identifying DFAS payments.

LOCATE SERVICES AND EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION

The Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) is a principal source of locate and employment information for child support caseworkers when establishing a support order and when initiating an income-withholding order.

As mandated by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, the FPLS was expanded to include two new federal databases: the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and the Federal Case Registry (FCR). States send information to the FCR for all child support cases, including those that have support orders and those for which orders have not yet been established. Persons registered on the FCR are compared daily against the NDNH, which contains employment information from new hire reports and quarterly wage records reported by states and federal agencies, as well as unemployment insurance claimant data reported by state agencies.

Automatic matching occurs whenever new or updated information is entered into either the FCR or NDNH. NDNH-to-FCR and FCR-to-NDNH matches are immediately sent to the state child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs). Upon receiving the FPLS match (“hit”) information, CSEAs are required to issue an income-withholding order within two days.

Using the FPLS State Match Data

An FPLS match should be accepted as a verification of employment and wages. Additional verification of employment is unnecessary. The next step is to submit the income-withholding order to DFAS Cleveland, OH to start withholding pay.

DFAS Cleveland Center
DFAS-GAG/CL
P.O. Box 998002
Cleveland, OH 44199-8002
(216) 522-5301 for customer service

By automating the generation of income-withholding notices, states can meet their two-day turnaround requirement. States that have automated this process have benefited from substantial increases in collections.

External Locate Requests for Information on Retired Military and Retired Federal Government Civilian Employees

Military retiree information is not provided to the NDNH. For information on military retiree pay for the past year, the child support caseworker needs to request an FPLS external locate (through his/her state child support office) to the Department of Defense. DoD returns these requests on a monthly basis. Include the retired military service personnel's name and Social Security number (SSN).

An income-withholding order to attach the pension or annuity of a retired military member should be sent to:

DFAS Cleveland Center
DFAS-GAG/CL
P.O. Box 998002
Cleveland, OH 44199-8002
(216) 522-5301 for customer service

Information on retired Federal government civilian employees is not provided to the NDNH. For information on any retired Federal government civilian employee's pay (pension or annuity) for the past year, the child support caseworker needs to request an FPLS external locate (through his/her state child support office) to the Department of Defense (DMDC). (DMDC will respond on behalf of the Office of Personnel Management.) DMDC returns these requests on a monthly basis. Include the retired federal civilian employee's name and SSN.

Matches provide resident address, employment status, and amount of monthly retirement. Retired pay will change once during the calendar year (usually in January) when there is a cost of living adjustment (COLA). Therefore, there is no need to re-verify these wages on a quarterly basis.

An income-withholding order to attach the pension or annuity of a retired, civilian employee of the Federal government should be sent to:

Office of Personnel Management
Court Ordered Benefits Branch
P.O. Box 17
Washington, D.C. 20044-0017
Phone (202) 606-0222
Fax (202) 606-7958

Change in DoD Policy Regarding Requests for Employment Verification

DoD has recently announced that it will no longer respond to verification of employment/ payroll data requests about active and reserve military, and civilian payroll records, because this information is already provided to the FPLS through quarterly wage reporting to the NDNH.

Requests for Locate and Historical Payroll Data of Military Personnel: Exceptions

DFAS will respond to the following requests for information regarding military personnel:

- Mailing address for service of process, and
- Past pay history exceeding two years.

These requests should be sent to a particular pay site, depending on the branch of service.

- Include the name and Social Security number of the military member.
- A signature is not required, but the caseworker's name or the name of a higher authority must appear on the request or it will be returned to the child support agency. (A system-generated name is acceptable.)

Army (Active Duty FEIN is 359990000; Reserve Duty FEIN is 351819323)

DFAS Indianapolis Center
ATTN: DFAS-PMTCBC/IN, Column 302G
8899 East 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-0865

Navy (Active Duty FEIN is 349990000; Reserve Duty FEIN is 341586724)

DFAS Cleveland Center
ATTN: DFAS-GAF/CL
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-8006

Marine Corps (Active Duty FEIN is 539990000; Reserve Duty FEIN is 539990000)

DFAS Kansas City Center
ATTN: DFAS-GA/KS
1500 East 95th Street
Kansas City, MO 64197-0001

Air Force (Active Duty FEIN is 849990000; Reserve Duty FEIN is 849980000)

DFAS Denver Center
ATTN: DFAS-GA/DE
6760 E. Irvington Place
Denver, CO 80279-8000

Retired Military Pay (FEIN is 340727612)

DFAS Cleveland Center
ATTN: DFAS-GAF/CL
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-8006

**Requests for Locate and Historical Payroll Data of DoD Civilian Personnel:
Exceptions**

DFAS will respond to the following requests for information regarding DoD civilian personnel:

- Past pay history exceeding two years.

These requests should be sent to a particular DFAS pay site, depending on the DoD employer.

- Include the name and Social Security number of the DoD civilian employee.
- A signature is not required, but the caseworker's name or the name of a higher authority must appear on the request, or it will be returned to the child support agency. (A system-generated name is acceptable.)

DoD civilian employees – Army:

DFAS-GA/DE
6760 East Irvington Place
Denver, CO 80279-8000

DoD civilian employees - Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, other DoD agencies and civilians overseas:

DFAS-GAF-CL
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-8006

Requests for Employment Verification of Civilians Working for DoD

DoD provides the FPLS with new hire and quarterly wage information through the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) for civilians working for DoD. This information, including address information, is also available from **The Work Number**.

The Work Number

DoD has contracted for employment and wage verification for its civilian personnel with a third-party provider, TALX Corporation, Inc. TALX Corp. maintains a database called the Work Number that has basic employment information, address, and payroll data, including current year-to-date pay plus payroll history for the prior two years. DoD electronically updates information to TALX Corp. every pay period. You may register for this service by phone at **(800) 660-3399** or via the Internet at www.theworknumber.com/socialservices.

Child support offices must first register by completing an application form, which is available through the web site or by phone. The Work Number offers both a free service and a paid service for employment, address, and wage verification.

- If you register for the free service, your responses are sent by fax within five business days.
- If you register for the paid service, you receive your responses by fax within one hour (if you have called the 800 number) or immediately on-line (if you have made your request via the Internet). The 2002 rate for the paid service is \$6 per verification. Offices are only charged if they receive income and employment, address, or wage information.

A complete list of participating employers who have contracted with The Work Number for employment verification is available on the web site. The Work Number Client Service Center number is (800) 966-7566.

INCOME-WITHHOLDING ORDERS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Where to Send Income-Withholding Orders for Military Personnel

Income-withholding orders for military personnel (active, reserve, retired) should be sent to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) office in Cleveland, Ohio:

DFAS Cleveland Center
DFAS-GAG/CL
P.O. Box 998002
Cleveland, OH 44199-8002

The DFAS Income-Withholding Customer Service Number is (216) 522-5301.

The DFAS web site for income-withholding information is <http://www.dfas.mil/money/garnish>.

The web site includes a Questions and Answers fact sheet on how to obtain payroll information on DoD military and civilian employees.

Coast Guard

The Coast Guard is part of the Transportation Security Administration. Income-withholding orders for Coast Guard personnel should be sent to the following address:

Commanding Officer (LGL)
U.S. Coast Guard Pay and Personnel Center
Federal Building
444 SE Quincy Street
Topeka, KS 66683-3591
(785) 339-3596 (for questions)
(785) 339-3784 (fax for employment verification and pay requests)

Garnishments vs. Voluntary and Involuntary Allotments

- A garnishment for child support means there is a judicial/administrative income-withholding order in place (mandated in 1990 for IV-D cases and in 1994 for all income-withholding orders). (42 U.S.C. 659).

- A voluntary allotment is a method available to military service personnel for paying debts, for example, having DFAS make a mortgage payment when the service member is overseas. Voluntary allotments for child support were used prior to the federal legislation requiring mandatory income-withholding for child support. Many are still active. A voluntary allotment is completely under the member's control and can be started, stopped, or amended at will by the military personnel.
- An involuntary allotment (pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 665) is an income-withholding action enforceable against *active duty* military pay. Involuntary allotments have advantages compared to garnishment actions when the maximum amount payable from the disposable income does not allow full payment. This is due to the fact that military allowances, such as basic allowance for housing (BAH), are included in the disposable pay calculations for involuntary allotment. An involuntary allotment begins with a court or administrative order establishing a child support obligation and an arrearage in an amount equal to or greater than two months support under the order. Regulations require that when using the involuntary allotment, the child support office must send a copy of the underlying court order. See 32 C.F.R. Part 54 for detailed instructions.

When a Federal Employee/Reservist is Called to Active Duty

If a reservist is called to active duty, DFAS does NOT submit a new hire report for this person. If a civilian employee, who is in the reserves and working for the military is called to active duty and DFAS already has an income-withholding order on file, DFAS will roll over the withholding to the employee's military pay. If the employee works for another federal agency, the state should issue an income-withholding order to DFAS. (When a reservist with a child support order is called to active duty, the employer might not notify the child support office, and the income-withholding order would not be satisfied.) The FPLS (NDNH) quarterly wage report would notify the state of the change in the employee's employer, thus alerting the state to issue a new income-withholding order.

What Happens to the Income-Withholding Order When the Military Member Retires?

When a military member with an income-withholding order for child support retires, the order does not automatically attach to the retirement pay (pension) of that member. However, DFAS is building an electronic interface that eventually will allow the active duty pay system to alert the garnishment operation that the child support order should be attached to the retirement pay of the military member who is retiring. Until that interface is in place, the child support office should contact DFAS as to why the child support payment has stopped. This will alert DFAS Garnishments to send the withholding order to be processed against the member's retirement pay.

Multiple quarterly wage (QW) reports for one noncustodial parent in the military could be received by a CSEA because a person could be both a DoD civil service employee and a

reservist. In fact, there are many people working for DoD in both capacities. When the CSEA receives the first QW match, it should send the income-withholding order to DFAS Cleveland for garnishment. Garnishments will be applied to all pay available at that time.

Kids First

DFAS has an electronic child support submission system that can process individual income-withholding requests via an on-line web system called "Kids First." Mass case processing is also supported via a batch interface to this system using the OCSE CSENet 2000 system. More information on Kids First, and how to access it, is available from the DFAS Cleveland field organization at (216) 522-5118 or visit the DFAS Kids First section on the OCSE web site at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/stsys/tab99.htm>. To sign up for Kids First, contact Larry Sharpley at (216) 522-5435, ex. 41677.

OBTAINING MEDICAL SUPPORT FROM MILITARY PERSONNEL

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)

The military health care program is called TRICARE/CHAMPUS (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services). A system called DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) maintains the information on the military service personnel (known as the sponsor) and dependents enrolled in this program. The process for obtaining medical support from military parents is described below.

How to enroll in person

First of all, the child must be determined to be a military dependent and enrolled in DEERS. The documents needed for enrollment into DEERS should include a court ordered paternity determination (if the child's parents were not married), birth certificate, and a court order for child support or other means of providing support. The custodial parent must go to the nearest military ID card-issuing facility and present the appropriate documents to the verifying officer.

How to enroll by mail

A custodial parent wishing to enroll by mail should contact any military installation with a RAPIDS center. (RAPIDS stands for Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification Card System and refers to the program through which individuals receive ID cards and through which all personnel changes are made.) Location of the nearest enrollment site or military installation can be obtained from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Telephone Center from 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Pacific Time, Monday through Friday at (800)-538-9552. The nearest location may also be found via the Internet at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/>. (This web site is restricted to .mil and .gov users. County agencies or contractors will not be able to access it.)

Before the DEERS enrollment can be completed, an attempt will be made to have the sponsor sign the paperwork. The amount of time for this process will vary depending on the location and the assignment of the military member. If the sponsor is unwilling to sign, the verifying official may sign on behalf of the sponsor after all efforts to obtain the sponsor's signature have failed and those efforts have been documented.

Once enrolled in DEERS, the child is eligible to receive medical care in two ways. The child may be able to obtain medical care and medications from military hospitals and clinics. The child can also use the cost share medical coverage, TRICARE, with civilian health providers. Getting health care from a uniformed service hospital or clinic, when available, saves money and paperwork. Military bases have Health Benefits Advisors to assist custodial parents on medical options and choices.

TRICARE uses the term "shared" rather than "covered" because the cost is shared by the beneficiary after an annual deductible cost is satisfied. Claims to TRICARE can be submitted up to a year after treatment. Entitlement to DoD medical benefits is determined by either the child's date of birth, or the date(s) of the sponsor's military service, not the DEERS enrollment date. A TRICARE handbook explaining coverage is available by writing or calling:

TRICARE Management Activity (TMA)
Public Affairs Branch
Aurora, Colorado 80045-6900
(303) 361-1000/1129

How to Learn Whether a Dependent Has Been Enrolled in DEERS (TRICARE)

A legal dependent (one for whom paternity has been established) of a military personnel is eligible for TRICARE medical services through DEERS. The custodial parent can enroll the dependent at any military installation. If a caseworker wants to learn whether a child has already been enrolled in DEERS, he/she should write to the following address:

DMDC Support Office
Attn: CA99
400 Gigling Road
Seaside, CA 93955-6771

Include the name and Social Security number (SSN) of the military service personnel, as well as the name, SSN, and date of birth of the dependent.

Where to Send the Medical Support Notice for Active Duty and Retired Military

Send the National Medical Support Notice to DMDC. Currently DMDC will respond with a letter in-lieu of the form. Once an active duty military member and family members have been enrolled in the DEERS, they have medical benefits. These medical benefits do not include dental or vision care.

Send the National Medical Support Notice to:

DMDC Support Office
Attn: CA99
400 Gigling Road
Seaside, CA 93955-6771

Please do not send requests for medical coverage information for medical support orders to the DFAS in Cleveland.

How to Obtain Medical Insurance Information on DoD Civilian Employees

Medical insurance information on DoD civilian employees may be obtained from the human resources department of the employing agency. OCSE is also working with DoD to establish a central site for obtaining medical information on DoD civilian employees.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PAYMENTS

How to Understand the Military Leave and Earning Statement (LES)

For military pay information, refer to <http://www.dfas.mil> and first click on "Money Matters" and then click on "Military Pay." From this screen click on "Pay Rates" for pay tables, or click on "Military LES" (Leave and Earnings Statement) to understand the military LES.

Redirecting Payments to Your State Disbursement Unit (SDU)

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) handles all payroll for the military. DFAS has named two points-of-contact in the military for redirecting any child support payment (and spousal support if appropriate) to your SDU. These points-of-contact can assist you in redirecting both garnishments (income attachments) and voluntary allotments for all the armed services, including payments to retirees:

Frank Hrouda
DFAS-PGLIS/CL
(216) 522-5435, ex. 41609
frank.hrouda@dfas.mil

and

Kathleen Golden
DFAS-PGLIS/CL
(216) 522-5435, ex. 41606
kathleen.golden@dfas.mil

Questions about Child Support Checks from DoD Civilians

If you have a question about a child support check that DFAS submits on behalf of a DoD civilian employee, there are three Civilian Pay Centers that may be able to help you:

DoD Navy civilian, Marine Corps civilian and overseas DoD civilian employees:

DFAS Charleston, SC
Civilian Pay Service, Customer Service
(843) 746-6500
6:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

DoD Air Force civilian and other DoD agencies' civilian employees:

DFAS Pensacola, FL
Civilian Pay Service, Customer Service
(850) 473-6222
7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Central Standard Time

DoD Army civilian employees:

DFAS Denver, CO
Civilian Pay Service, Customer Service
(800) 538-9043
6:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Mountain Time

OCSE Military Liaison

The OCSE military liaison officer is Larry Holtz, whose duties include working with the Department of Defense on child support related statutes and regulations; providing guidance to child support agencies on military matters; and resolving issues between the Department of Defense and Child Support Enforcement agencies. You may contact him at:

Larry Holtz
Court and Military Liaison Officer
Office of Child Support Enforcement—4th floor
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20447
(202) 401-5376; Fax (202) 205-4342
lholtz@acf.hhs.gov